

***Remarks by Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges, commanding general, USAREUR
USAREUR Change of Command ceremony
November 5, 2014, Wiesbaden, Germany***

In 1983 I was a First Lieutenant, stationed in Garlstadt, Germany, with the 2nd Armored Division (Fwd). I remember one day there was a lot of commotion in the company area when we heard that the commanding general of USAREUR, General Glen K Otis, was coming to visit us in Garlstadt. I thought that was really cool and then I asked my company commander, "Sir, what is USAREUR?"

When GEN Otis did visit, a group of us lieutenants were invited to have lunch with him. I thought he was the oldest guy I'd ever seen in my life. I'm glad that USAREUR commanders these days are so much younger.

General and Mrs Odierno, General and Mrs Breedlove, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for being here today.

Ambassador Mandell, my fellow Redneck from Florida, I'm very glad that you and Julie are here. I don't know anybody who genuinely loves and cares for Soldiers as much as you two.

Brigadier General Mark Laubenthal, CSM Dave Davenport, the formation looks great. Thanks to you and all of the men and women who worked to ensure a professional ceremony that would reflect so well on US Army Europe. I am so proud of both of you and excited about joining you.

I am pleased that so many allies, friends, and supporters are here.

I'm going to single out a couple of lifelong friends who made it today and who represent part of why I love our Alliance and the opportunity to serve in Europe.

They are Brigadier General Claudio Minghetti of the Italian Army's famous Garibaldi Brigade, Colonel (Promotable) Hartmut Renk, Dep Cdr of the Germany Army's Training Command,

Colonel Tony de Baets of Belgian armed forces, and Mrs Carolyn Dexter from the UK, and her husband, Martin.

Tony de Baets and Hartmut Renk and Carolyn Dexter and I all served together in Office of the SACEUR in 1995-1997, when General George Joulwan was SACEUR, and have stayed friends ever since. Claudio Minghetti, an exceptional strategic thinker, was with me for two years as we stood up Allied Land Command in Izmir. Thanks to each of you for being here and yes, I'm as surprised as you are that I'm standing here today.

Don and Ann Campbell represent everything that is good about the US Army. They've given so much of themselves in the Service of the Nation and have provided leadership and example to all of us. You both have made me feel very welcome and the transition here for me has been the most effective and transparent I've ever experienced. Thank you.

Don, I look forward to continuing all of the innovations and progress and momentum you've created here.

However, there is one legacy of yours that I just can't carry forward. No way I'm going to wear those tanker boots!

Ladies and gentlemen, this is a pivotal time in the history of US Army Europe and NATO. Next week is the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain. US Army Europe played a decisive role in that.

Today we face a resurgent Russia that has illegally annexed Crimea and which threatens our Friends and Allies. It is going to require a trained, ready, and resilient US Army Europe, as part of a joint team and a reinvigorated Alliance, to assure our allies and to deter Russia from further encroachment. Readiness and professionalism by our Soldiers and our Allies is what is needed now and I'm committed to that.

US Army Europe's contribution to the success of US European Command and our Alliance will be based on three enduring priorities: leader development, readiness, and enabling the alliance and our partners.

Positive, adaptive leadership can solve any problem and accomplish any mission and the Army's Operating Concept is based on adaptive leaders at every level. I believe that US Army Europe is the leadership laboratory for the Army. Our young leaders have the opportunity to conduct missions with Soldiers and civilian leaders from more than 50 nations, often in distributed operations where a captain or sergeant may be the senior person on site and they are interacting with ambassadors and army chiefs and other leaders. This experience, along with full support of the Army's NCO education system and every other facet of our institutional leader development programs, will ensure that USAREUR continues to produce adaptive leaders for the Army. This emphasis on leader development will also ensure that we have an environment in our formations where every man and woman feels valued, empowered, and confident in their fellow soldiers.

Readiness to perform any mission is why we are forward stationed in Europe. Though we make up only 5% of the Army's manpower, US Army Europe touches or is involved in most of what the US Army delivers in terms of strategic effect. I think US Army Europe is a bargain for the Army and for the Nation. We guarantee access to allies and critical infrastructure. US Army Europe enables "early entry" so we don't have to do "forced entry".

Along with our joint team mates, we are the manifestation of America's commitment to the alliance and our partners. Our incomparable logisticians, engineers, health care professionals, aviators, communicators, Paratroopers and Cavalrymen, intel professionals, and soldiers from every part of the army are involved all over Europe and much of Africa right now, setting the theater, ensuring access, and supporting multiple combatant commanders.

Officers and NCO's from the Training Centers at Grafenwoehr and Hohenfels, invaluable assets for US strategic efforts in Europe, are touching and helping to grow capability in literally dozens of nations every week.

A critical part of Readiness in Europe is the integration and employment of Reserve Component Capabilities. US Army Europe, under Don Campbell, has been a show case for how to use the enormous capabilities of the US Army Reserve and the National Guard. Reservists perform critical tasks across Europe, especially in Civil Affairs and Logistics, and I look forward to working with Jeff Talley on potentially expanding that here. Likewise, the State Partnership Programs of the National Guard provide invaluable support to our Allies and Partners and dramatically extend the reach of US Army Europe across the Alliance. We will continue that momentum and look for places where we can expand it.

The world class facilities and installations here in USAREUR, so carefully designed and managed during the reduction of the US Army's footprint over the past 20 years, give the Army a platform that enables power projection and strategic and operational agility...options for our national leadership that only US Army Europe, in partnership with IMCOM-E, can provide.

We are in Phase Zero now, setting the theater for whatever may be required, enabling the arrival of the Army's regionally aligned force, a concept that has already borne fruit for US European Command and which is already more mature and sophisticated than some might have predicted when it was introduced.

Clearly, US Army Europe won't do anything by itself. Nobody loves airpower or Special Forces as much as a Soldier on the ground and we will spare no effort to ensure US Army forces and capabilities are valued members of a joint team.

Hell, I even like the Navy and Marine Corps; except for one day a year.

But sir, I've done some research on this. I have confirmed that every person in the world lives on the land. So you're going to need your land component to be ready and I'm committed to ensuring that you and all of US European Command and General Gorenc and Admiral Ferguson and General Neller can be confident we will be ready to do what you need us to do.

Finally, to our great alliance.

NATO is the most successful alliance in the history of the world. It has managed to adapt to changing security conditions around the world during the 65 years of its existence. The results of the Wales Summit include the readiness action plan and the very high readiness joint task force. US Army Europe will work hard, as part of the EUCOM effort and in coordination with Allied Land Command, to develop and implement these initiatives.

US Army Europe has likewise adapted to the Alliance, under Don's leadership, and I'm excited about the potential of very close cooperation with Allied Land Command in training, operations, building relationship, and enabling the NATO Force Structure and Command Structure.

LANDCOM recently went through a major upgrade, to LANDCOM 2.0, with the arrival of LTG Mick Nicholson, and I look forward to working with him and the LANDCOM team to ensure that NATO's land forces remain the most effective and interoperable in the World.

I also look forward to adding Officers and NCO's from some of our Allies to our own Staff. The arrival of BG Mark Laubenthal of the German Army to US Army Europe as our Chief of Staff was a bold, innovative move by Don Campbell, supported by General Odierno, and it opens the door for further innovation.

The alliance has steadfastly maintained its core purpose....Article 5, Collective defense, an attack on one is an attack on all.

US Army Europe will continue to be ready, reliable, and forward stationed to underwrite that guarantee of collective defense. We've been here for 65 years doing just that and we will continue to be prepared to win in a complex world.

Thank you. Army strong!